The Bee's Home Magazine Page

The Conservators

By ADA PATTERSON.

She is tall and has a complexion like a cup of weak chocolate, a wide, pleasant smile and keenly observant eyes. She is that helpful institution for busy women visiting maid.

In a large city, the "Yes, ma'am," she said, scrutinizing a girdle and giving a testing tug at a hook to see whether it were strong enough to stand the day's strain. "I saw her throw away a good jacket. She threw it into the middle of the street. She says, 'I ain't going' to wear that thing no more. It ain't the style.' I made up my mind that I was going to get that coat. I'd have been glad to wear it. But by the time I had locked the front and back door—I always has to do that in that thievin' neighborhood—it was gone."

Tillie is one of the world's conservators. Mollie, her neighbor in one of the crowded tenements near North river, is one of its wasters. Tillie knows that whatever is clean and may be made whole—she is an artist in these vanishing fine arts, darning and patching—can be used somewhere, somehow. Hence her mourning of the cast-off jacket.

"It might not have been good enough for Mollie to wear to church, or when she goes out walking with her young man, but it was good enough to throw over your head when you go to the butcher, and to wear through the halls on cold mornings when you go to the door for the milk. It would save her better one and make your new one last longer. I do hate to see things thrown away."

Tillie's lamentation meant more than the accumulative instinct of some of her race. It denoted her as one of the valuable class of persons who are the care takers of the world.

It is not in all of us to build. She had not the power to organize, to construct, to erect monuments of industry. It is not in all of us to heal. Our tongues may be too like the stiletto points, our hands too heavy, perhaps our hearts too hard or the area of sentiment in our character map too arid. But we can all be conservators. We can take care of what is. We can preserve.

Show me what a woman does with her clothes at night and I will tell you whether she is a conservator or a waster. Does she spread her gown carefully over a chair back, turning the lining outward to ventilate the garment, and letting the folds hang straight so that they will not wrinkle? If she does that she has earned the title of conservator. Or does she fling it in a neglected heap upon the floor or leave it wherever it drops? The fate of the waster is awaiting her around the corner.

Does the housekeeper let the gas stove burn while she peels her potatoes? Does she throw into the garbage can a half saucer of berries left from breakfast? Does she make more starch than she needs for washing? Does she throw out bones with numerous bits of meat sticking to them? Does she leave soap to dissolve because she is too careless or thoughtless to rescue it from the dissolving water or dishpan or washtub? Then is she a waster.

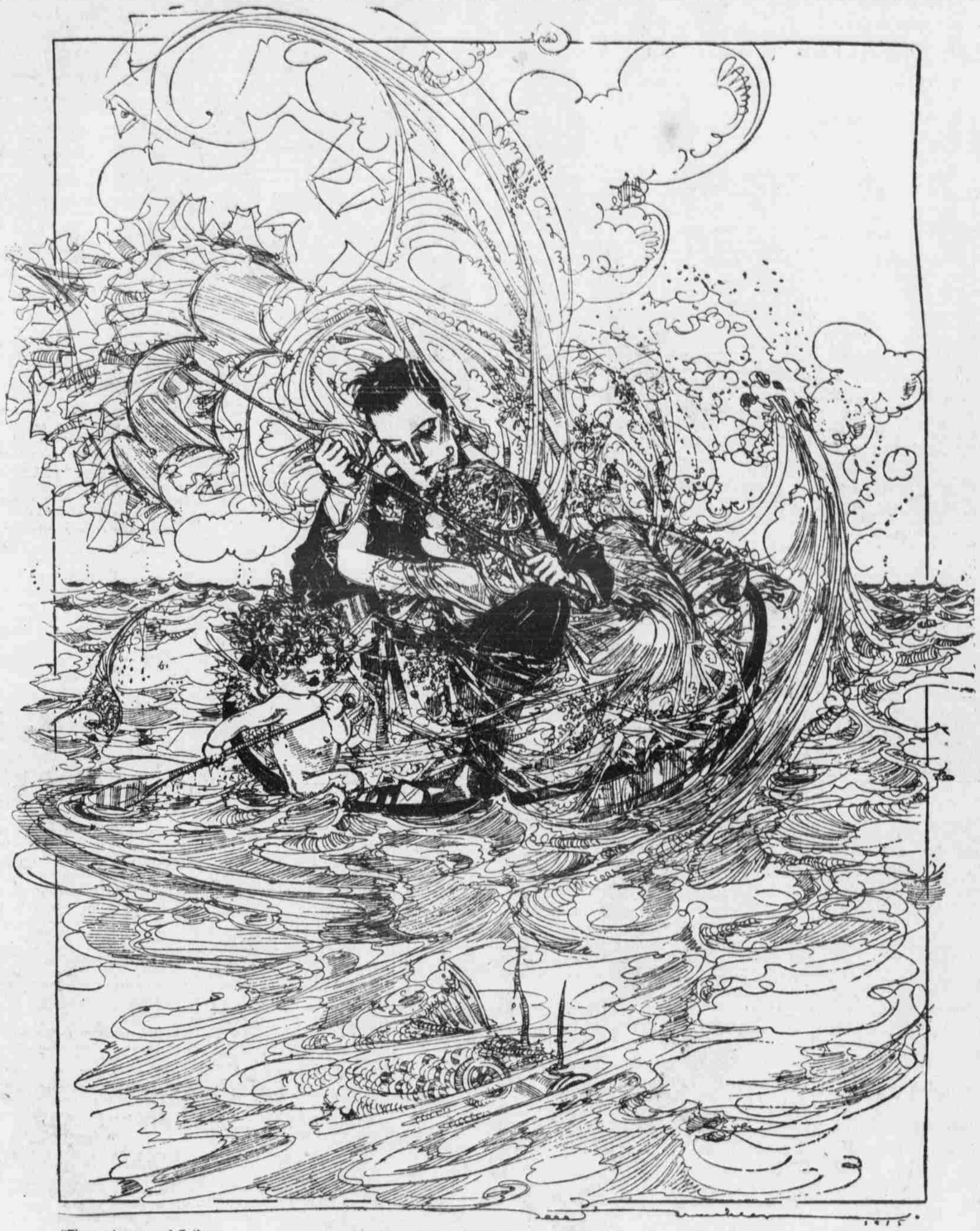
For the conservator would not turn on the gas of the stove until the potatoes were peeled and ready to be set on to boil. The conservator would make the remaining berries the basis for a pudding or at least the flavor of a pudding. She would calculate to a teaspoonful the amount of starch she needed and would make too little rather than too much. That meat close to the bone she would scrape off and use it in nourishing hash or stew. The scraps of soap she would save for the next need.

The waster will toss away a piece of ribbon or wreath of flowers that are slightly faded. The conservator will shake the dust from them and wrapping them daintily in tissue paper, put them into a box of trimmings that are her reserve fund of millinery and next season, or the one after, you may see them adorning a hat, beneath a mist of veiling that obscures their defects.

But there are conservators on a less material plane. There are those who, knowing that friendship is a sensative plant, nourish it with care. There are those who knowing that the love of a man for a woman, and a woman for a man, is a fragile thing, guard it as they would a bit of valuable, half tran parent china, or a bubble of cut glass.

One of the Bride Fleet!--- (Outward Bound.)

By NELL BRINKLEY.



"Three wise ones of Gotham,
Went to sea in a bowl;
And if the bowl had been stronger,
My song would have been longer!"
—Mother Goose.

Gay little bowls, with no food aboard, sometimes gasping shallow-rimmed, with a bride's gauzy white veil for a sail, they sail out each year in a thick little fleet, with always three a-shipping to the world's end and the land of only-love-matters! Three wise ones; the little soft bride, and the man who adores her, and the sunny, willing small "hand" who's bo's'n tight and the midship mite and the crew of the Honey-Bowl! His wrists are silken and weak, but he can swing a true paddle. His eyes are very blue like the hearts of hare-bells with the mountain-dew fresh on them—but he can see far and keen. His voice is silvery and thn—but it sings above the fearful wash of the riding waves, and just when the hearts of the other two are cold and sunk deep like stones in the sea, they warm and lighten at the heartening peal of it calling "all's well!"

Just don't sail out in your twirling bowl without the sailor-one of your companee! You'll need him something surprising. And make it a strong bowl with high sides.

"If the bowl had been stronger,
My song would have been longer!"
—NELL BRINKLEY.

The Greatest Science of All

GARRETT P. SERVISS.

"I don't care anything about astronomy. I judge it is about as important as chess. I heard these words from an apparently intelligent man, evidently unusually well-to-do in a material way, who had "made his fortune," and had learned from his experience in life no higher lesson than that a strict application to business is the surest road to prosprosperity. I said to him:

"When you link astronomy with chess, you at least acknowledge its intellectual character, although you show complete ignorance of its history, its methods and its aims."

"Well, what does it amount to?" he demanded, testily. "Can anybody improve his condition in this world by mooning about other ones? What do I care whether Mars is in habited or not? What good does it do me if there are giants up there, as I have heard? I can't sell them anything. They are commercially of no account. Show me a way to open up trade with them and I'll go as far as anybody in astronomy. It would have some meaning then.

"But all this stuff is pure speculative bash! I don't even care whether the earth goes round the sun or the sun round the earth."

"Then," said I, "if your mind is incapable of kindling into great thoughts at the stupendous spectacle of the starry universe; if you are unmoved by the sight of the countless multitude of vast, blazing suns scattered around us in space, at distances so immense that they appear like mere points of light in the bottomless, black profundity; if there is nothing for you in the reflection that the earth is of infinitely less relative importance amidst this illimitable creation than a species of mist hovering in the spray of Niagara; if you can catch no inspiration from the thought that man, infinitesimal as he is physically, nevertheless possesses the mental power to grasp these wonders—then take a lower view, and conider a side of astronomy which even you must acknowledge to be in the highest degree practical and useful.

"Even in the most ancient times the traders, crossing the vast oriental deserts with their treasures, were indebted to men wise in star-lore for the laying out of the routes that they followed. The first navigators of the little Mediterranean sea had to learn the geography of the stars before they could venture out of sight of land.

"But," said the man, "these are old things, passed long ago. It may be that once astronomy was useful in studying about these things, but that is all done now. We have got our measures and our with the stars seems to me like studying the A B C book after you are out of school."

"No," I said, "you are still wrong. If the observatories of the world were closed tonight, never to be reopened, in a little while the entire life of the planet earth would be completely upset. Clocks and chronometers would go wrong. There would be collisions and disasters without number on land and sea, until the great line of navigation and of railroad communication were all thrown into disorder or had to be abandoned. I could not tell you in all our talk the full story of the calamity that would overtake mankind if the practical cultivation of astronomy should suddenly cease. The astronomer has many other things to think of beside the question of the existence or non-existence of inhabitants on Mars."

Making a Star Role for Yourself

By BEATRICE FAIRFAX.

"We do not oppose the part we play in life—but whether we play that part well or ill, we do choose. The part was chosen for us by the author of the play."—Epictetus.

Discontent casts a gray shadow on all the brightness of life. It occupies the soul with regret and causes the mind to feel maltreated and abused. It fills the heart with sorrow. It occupies so great a place in the mental and spiritual life of the one who feels it, that there is no room for more active physical forces to drive it out.

Discontent is not one of the vices that takes possession of one forcibly and for evil. It is a result of deliberately fostered moods. What is more, it is akin to one of the finest of the virtues—if only that virtue is not misdirected. Discontent can be turned into ambition, almost for the trying.

The vice that embitters life, and leaves its token visible for all to see—the vice that weighs down the mouth corners and dulls the eye of the physical being as well as of the mind and soul and heart, can be transmuted into pure gold for the mere trying.

How much did it ever profit any one to sit in sackcloth and ashes crying either "Mea culpa—mea maxima culpa," or less sorrowfully and more bitterly complaining of the unfairness of life? There is absolutely nothing to gain by feeling that you have "made a mess of things"—or that you have not had "a square deal." There is everything to gain in trying to make the best of the circumstances that surround you and to hew your way to a better set of circumstances.

It is almost hackneyed to speak of Abraham Lincoln studying in his poverty-ridden shack in order to be ready for any chance that might come. And yet he stands only as a notable example of men and women who have acted so well the parts for which they were cast that a minor role unfolded itself and became one of the star parts of life in which it was cast.

The minute discontent is purified of its feeling of helplessness, the second that it determines to cast off its garment of mourning and to gird itself for endeavor, that minute it rises above whining inactivity to the shining realms of ambition.

I know a girl who makes it a source of sorrow that she has a discontented nature. "I can't ever be happy," says Gertrude. "I simply have one of those discontent natures that longs for all things it cannot have and that is bored by what it is given. I am just cursed by my own discontentedness, and the worst of it is that I know what is the matter with me. I have a jealous, envious, discontented nature."

What a useful bit of knowledge you have in your power of self-analysis, Gertrude! Why not go after some of the things you want? Why not look about you and proceed to attain through effort all the best prizes in your circle of living? Coin your desires into actions. Make of your own envy a force for trying to win some of the things you see others possessing and long for, too. Use your discontent with what you are and have as a scourge if need be, to being and having more. And in action your useless jealousy will die of lack of morbid leisure in which to exercise itself and grow.

There is a story told of a girl who found herself suddenly orphaned and poor, and with nothing in her education or talents to win a livelihood. Stranded and without ability, the fate of the "decayed gentlewoman" who lives a pensioner on the bounty of any relatives or friends who will give her a place in a chimney corner, stared her in the face. And then it occurred to her that she had always dusted her father's priceless porcelains and ivories, since no maid could be trusted with them, and her steady fingers and loving patience made the dusting of these treasures a safe and pleasant process.

What she could do was—dust! A most unromantic role truly. Would you consider adopting it, Miss Discontent? But since dusting seemed to be the part this girl could play, she adopted it and did her best with it. She brought intelligence, interest and enthusiasm to bear upon the task of cleaning house for rich folk who hated to entrust delicate ornaments and fabrics to careless hands. She started with one customer and at the end of ten years held the dignified position of—curator of a museum. For in acting well the part caring for fine, rare things, she came to know much about them and to feel inspired to study them.

Last year in the stage world the same principle was illustrated. A woman who had been playing minor roles in country town stock companies was entrusted with the role of an elderly cockney servant in a piece filled with many more attractive roles. But so well did the woman act her part, and so cleverly did she portray the elderly and unattractive servant, that she was "the hit of the piece."

It is always possible to be "the hit of the piece" if you play your part well enough—and it does not matter one whit what your part is? Be contented to play it—and ambitions to play it as well as ever you can. You can not "miscast" unless you make yourself a misfit to your part. There is a chance for success in doing well the most trivial thing. For anything well done is worthy of applause—and of the more tangible and lasting thing—success.